



Youth Webinar Report

**Problems Faced By Marginalised Communities
21 July 2020**

**Prepared by:
Electoral Support Project- UNDP**



1. Executive Summary

A third youth webinar, which is part of a larger youth webinar series, took place on 21 July 2020 to discuss the issues and problems marginalized communities faced in context of COVID-19. Moreover, the webinar also sought to provide recommendations on the ways to address these issues.

The youth webinar was attended by over 50 participants, including youth volunteers, representatives from UNDP, representatives from the communities of people living with disabilities. In the webinar, youth volunteers from all seven provinces in Nepal conducted surveys of the people in their community. The youth volunteers surveyed a total of 134 respondents for the survey spread across Nepal. The volunteers asked the survey respondents questions relating to the availability of food stock, their economic transactions in the context of the pandemic and the associated challenges, health and psycho-social counselling, availability of clean drinking water, issues on religious, caste-based and gender-based violence, their access to information during the COVID-19 and their opinion on the social accountability and transparency in handling the process, the ease of accessing education and learning for the children in their community, along with their access to relief materials that were provided by the government and various other agencies to support the testing times.

The webinar helped identify some trends that highlighted the problems that the respondents faced. They include: a lot of respondents lost their income source because of the pandemic, a lack of access to market their produce and products was a major reason for this loss of income. The participants also noted the various forms of religious, caste-based and gender-based violence in their communities. Majority of the respondents identified that radio, FMs and the television were effective means to spread awareness during such trying times. Therefore, the ensuing recommendation was to use these means to also disseminate messages relating to mental health. Majority of the youth volunteers, speaking on behalf of the respondents of the survey, shared that there is need for proper and coordinated collaboration among all tiers of the government as well as the development actors. They further shared that the youth volunteers can be mobilized as a catalyst to facilitate this process.

2. Introduction

2.1 Background & Rationale

The UNDP Electoral Support Project (ESP) and the Country Office (CO) collaborated to join forces in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. A joint analysis from the team concluded that a webinar conducted by and for the youth from across the seven provinces in Nepal would play a key role in informing about the ground realities. These would then also inform the five pillars for socio-economic framework including putting health first, protecting people, economic response and recovery, macro-economic response and multilateral collaboration and social cohesion and community resilience.

The third webinar was on Problems faced by marginalised communities in context of the COVID-19. The opening remarks for the event was provided by Ms. Binita Karki, Youth Officer at UNDP. Extending a warm welcome to the participants, she presented the objectives of the programme. The programme was organized so as to understand the challenges in the context of COVID-19 at the grassroots and to inform tangible and locally-led solutions to them, driven by the youth. She also added that the information obtained through these webinar series would inform UNDP's future work in the response and fight against the pandemic.

2.2 Objectives

- To bring issues of inclusion to the forefront.
- To engage the youth and capacitate them to get important information in the fight against COVID-19.
- To use the learnings from the youth webinars to inform future UNDP programming.

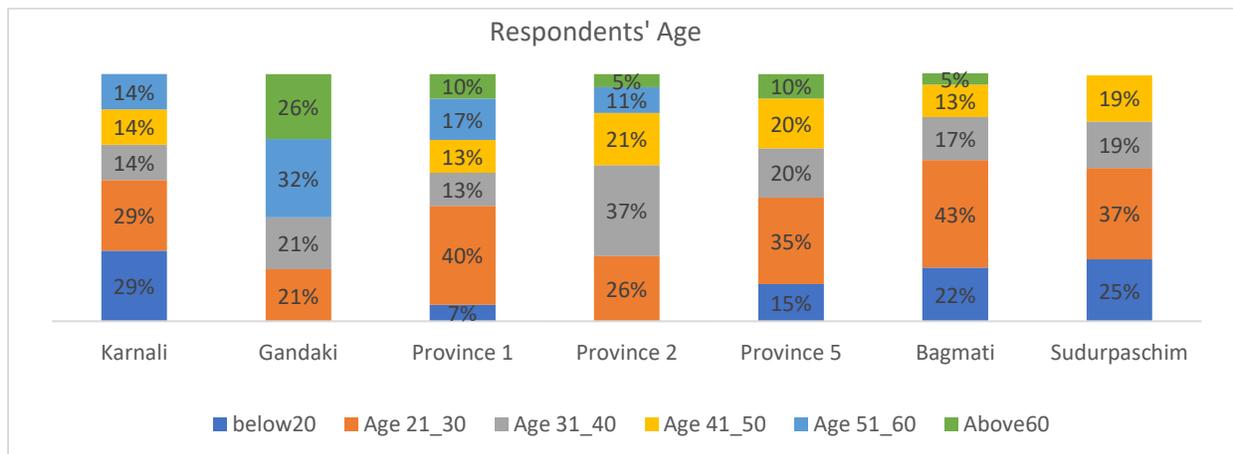
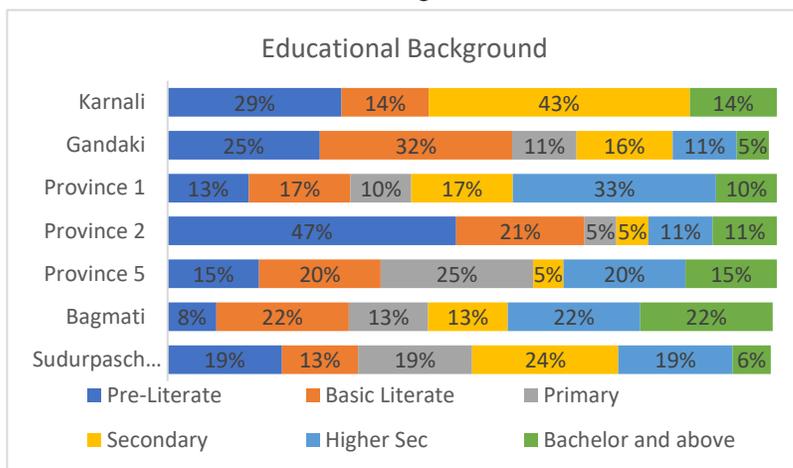
3. Key Findings

The webinar then included a presentation from Mr. Bishnu Nepali, Capacity Building Officer with the Electoral Support Project. In the presentation, he presented the key findings from the survey conducted across the seven provinces of Nepal, providing a general trend of the responses.

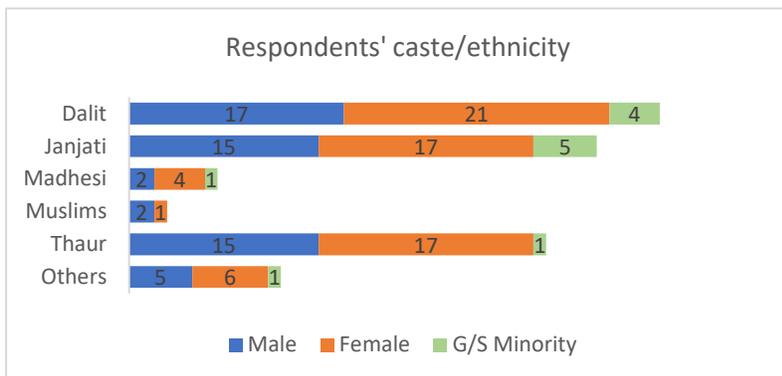
- *Respondents Demography*

There was a total of 134 respondents for the survey: 7 from Karnali Province, 19 from Gandaki Province, 30 from Province 1, 19 from Province 2, 20 from Province 5, 23 from Bagmati Province and 16 from Sudurpaschim Province. Among them, 49% were female, 42% male and 9% gender minorities.

There educational background of the respondents of the survey varied. Overall, the participants ranged from those who were not literate (21%) to those with a Bachelor's Degree or higher (12%). Those who were not literate represented the majority of the respondents. The province-wise representation in terms of educational background is presented in the adjacent graph.

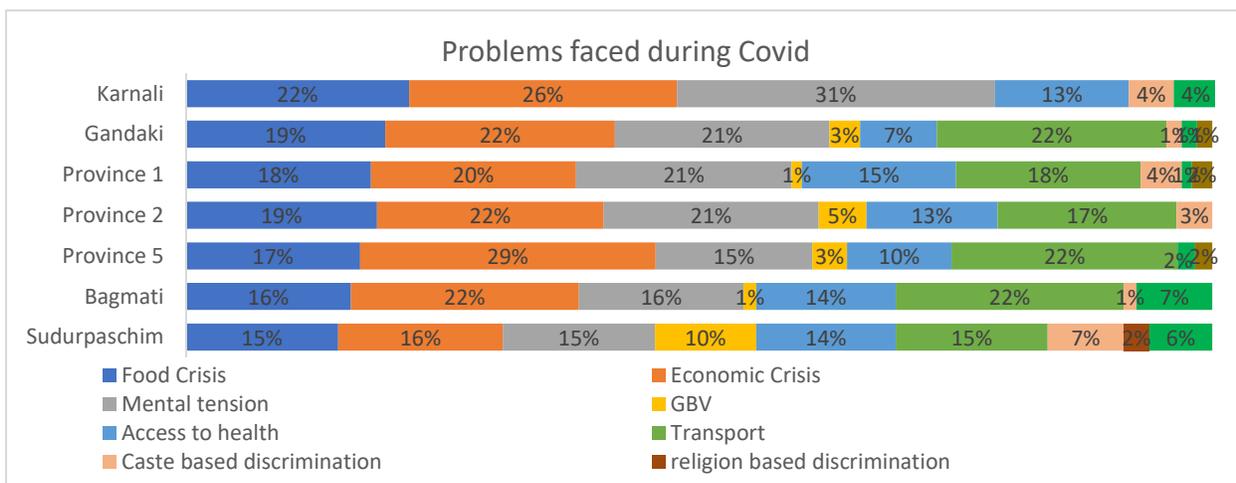


In terms of age, most of the respondents were between 21-30 years of age (34%). There were 9% respondents who were above 60 years of age and 12% who were below 20 years of age. The province-wise information is provided in the adjacent figure.



The participants were also drawn from various castes and ethnic backgrounds. From among them, 42 were from the Dalit community and 3 from the Muslim community. More details on their background is available in the graph on the left.

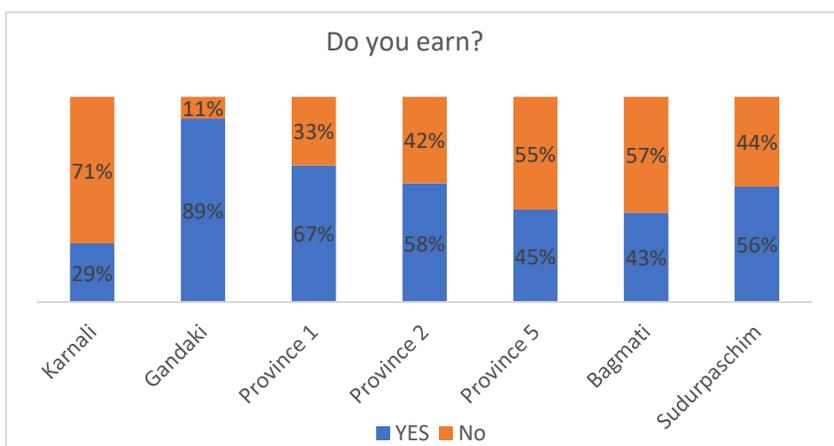
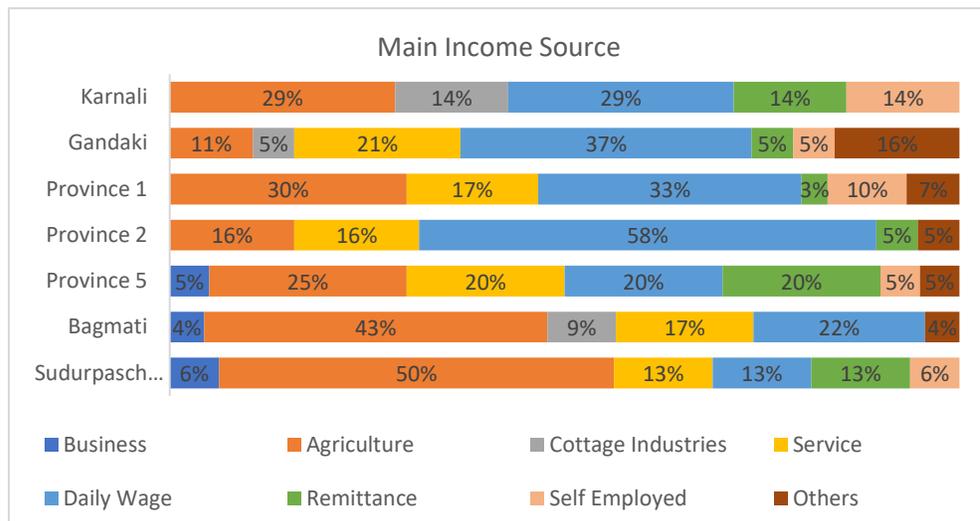
- *General Findings*



Overall, most of the respondents stated economic crisis as the major problem they faced during COVID-19 (22%), followed by mental tension, difficulty in transport and food crisis and access to health services.

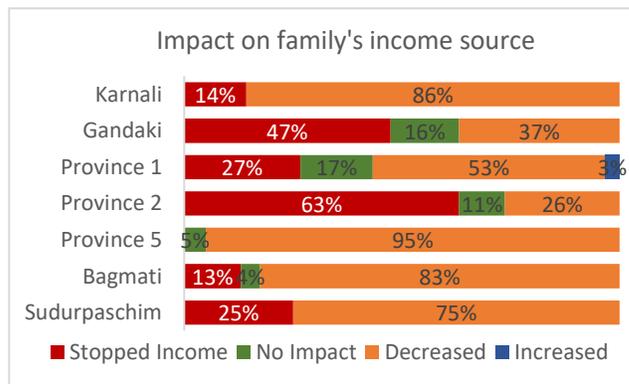
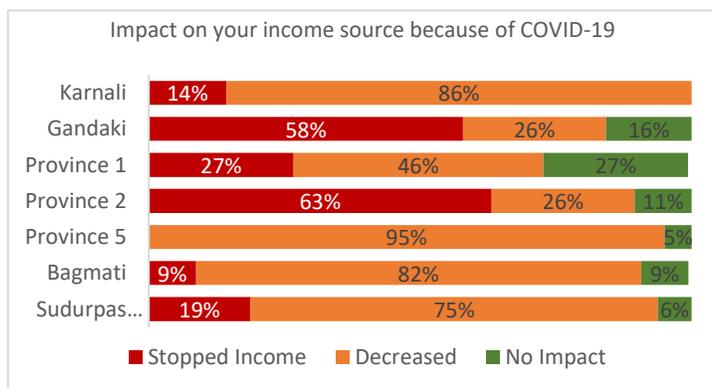
- *Economic Activities*

Most of the respondents stated that daily wage was the main source of income, followed by agriculture, service, remittance, others, self-employed and business. The province-wise disaggregated information is presented in the adjacent figure.



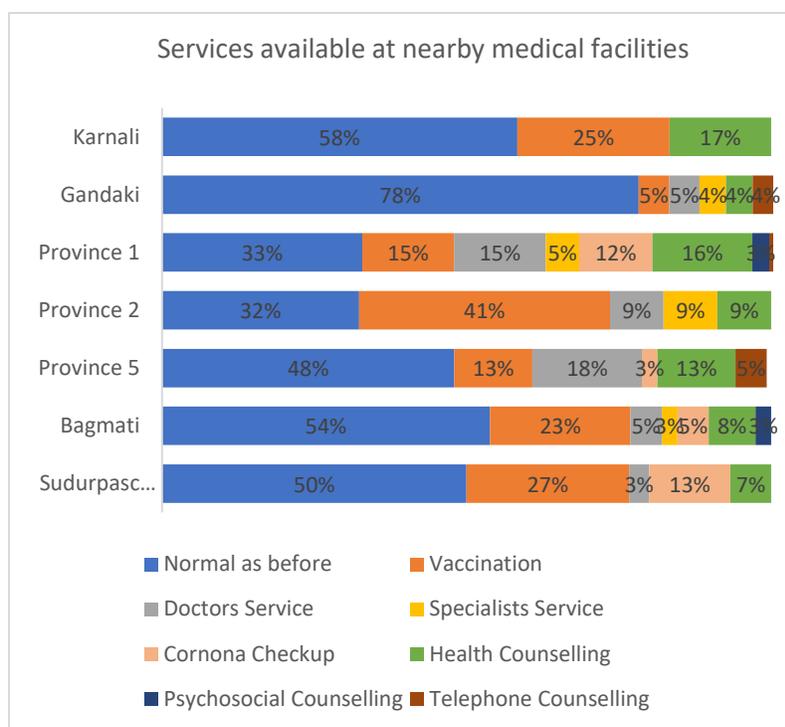
The respondents were also asked if they were active earners in their families: 58% earned themselves whereas 42% did not earn. From among those who earned themselves, 9% were self-employed, 22% were working in civil society organizations, 1% had permanent jobs, 18% in agriculture, 37% as daily wage earners, 5% in seasonal work and 8% in other jobs. The

respondents also shared that 36% conducted their financial transactions via cash, 20% via bank and 25% through loans or borrowing.



When the respondents were asked about the impact of COVID-19 on their and their family's income source, more than half of them stated that their family's income had decreased (63%) as well as their own income had also decreased (60%). Whereas, 28% reported that source of their family's income had stopped and 28% reported that their own income had also stopped. On the contrary, 19% reported no impact on their livelihood. Moreover, 40% of the respondents said that someone in their family lost their job because of the pandemic.

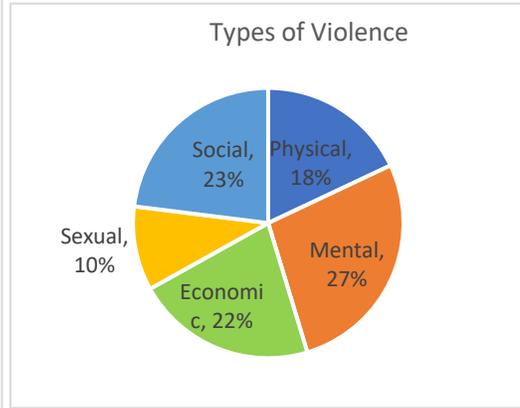
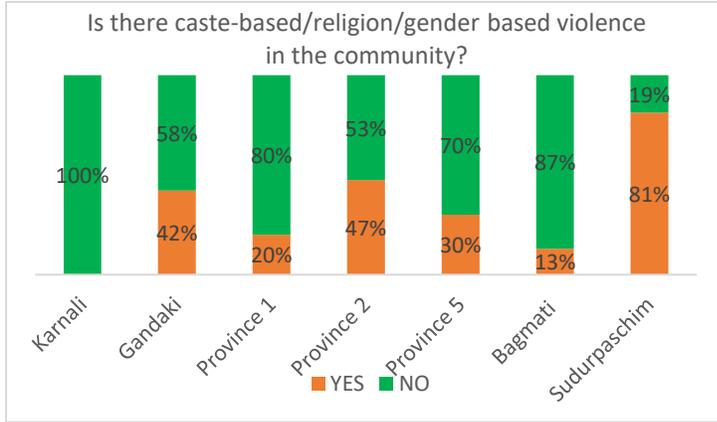
- *Health Facilities and Sanitation*



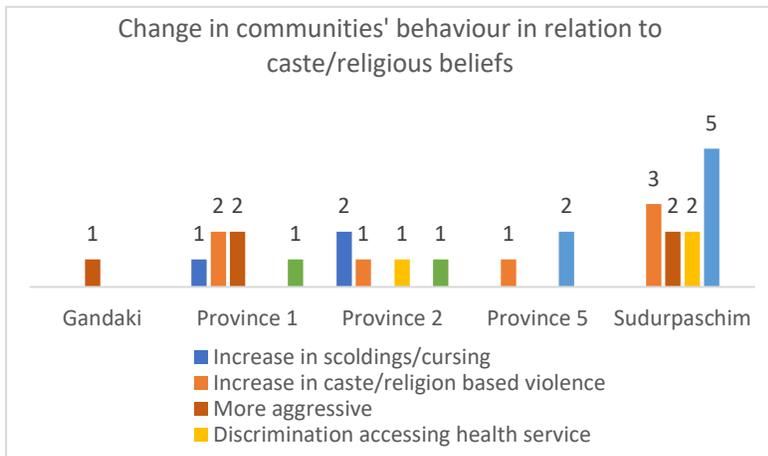
The respondents were also asked about the kind of facilities that were available at the nearest health post. They were asked if the services were available as before, and if they had vaccination services, doctor services, specialist services, COVID-19 testing, health, psychosocial and telephone counselling were available. From the respondents, 46% said the services were as before. However, the services such as health, psychosocial and telephone counselling were not available to a large degree.

The respondents were accessing water through various means: 37% of them had access to private water taps, 19% used public water taps or used a well, and 27% used tubewell water. However, 33% drank boiled water, 27% filtered water and 40% did not use any of the precautions. Moreover, 96% of the respondents had a toilet in their homes, and 4% did not, majority of them being from Province 2.

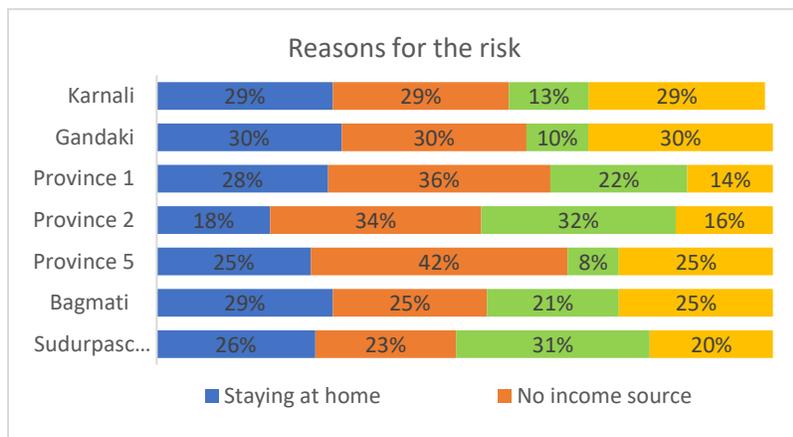
- *Social Protection*



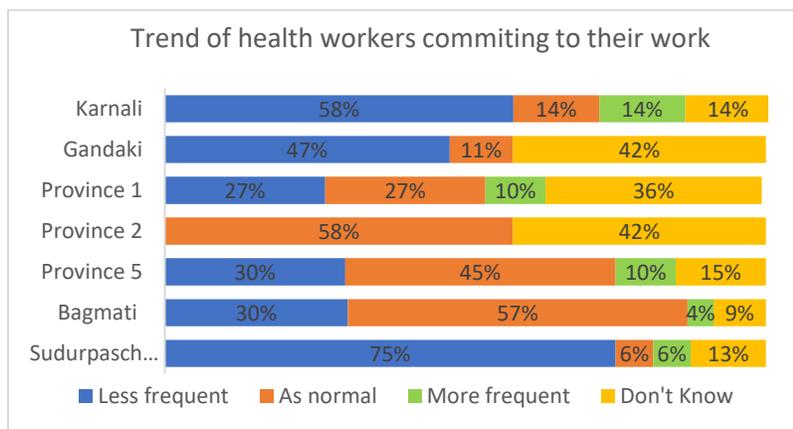
When asked if there were any forms of religious, caste-based or gender-based violence in their communities, 66% said that there were none whereas 34% said that there were. The majority of them identified the prevalence of mental violence at 27%, and 10% reported the prevalence of sexual violence.



The respondents were also asked if there were any changes in the communities' behaviour in relation to their caste and religious orientation. From among them, 80% reported no changes. And of the 20% who identified changes reported that there was increase in caste and religious based violence (26%), increase in violent acts (26%), increase in aggression (19%) and discrimination in accessing health services (11%).



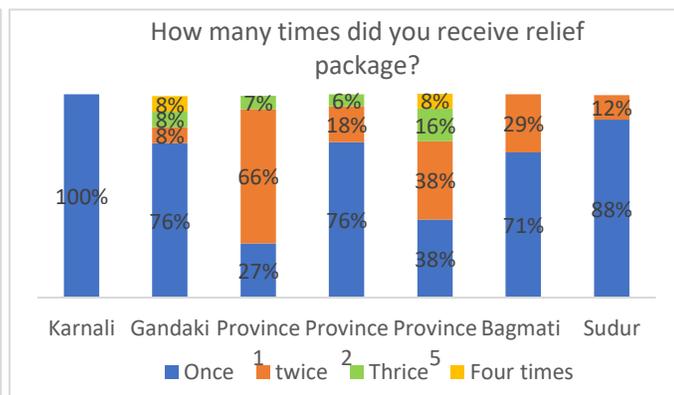
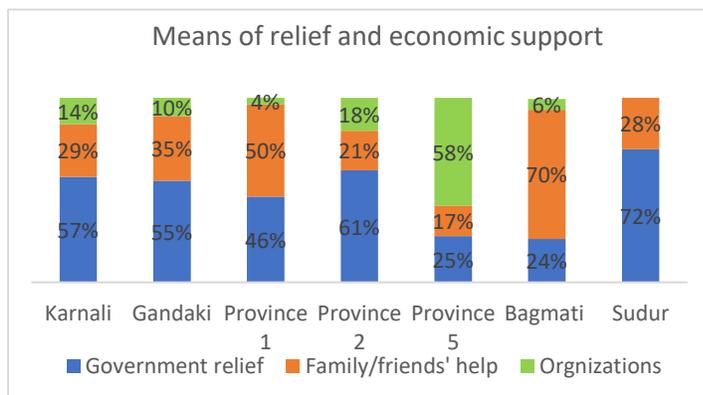
From the respondents, 31% said that the risk arose from not having an income source while 20% attributed this to patriarchy.



From the respondents, 34% said that the health workers were coming to work as before the onset of the pandemic; 34% said they were coming less frequently while 6% reported that the health workers were coming more frequently.

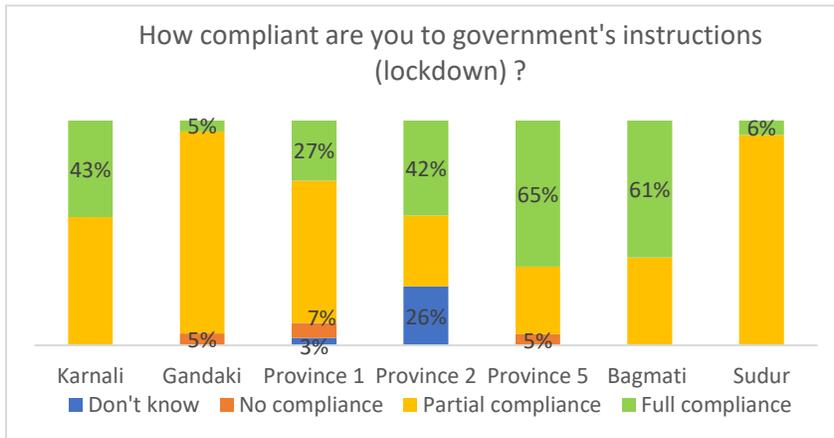
• *Relief Support*

Fifty-four percent of the respondents needed relief material during COVID-19, primarily from Sudurpaschim, Karnali and Province 2. 77% respondents said relief material was distributed in their communities and 11% said it was not distributed, while 12% were not aware. The respondents from Sudurpaschim were the majority who said relief materials were not distributed. The main source of



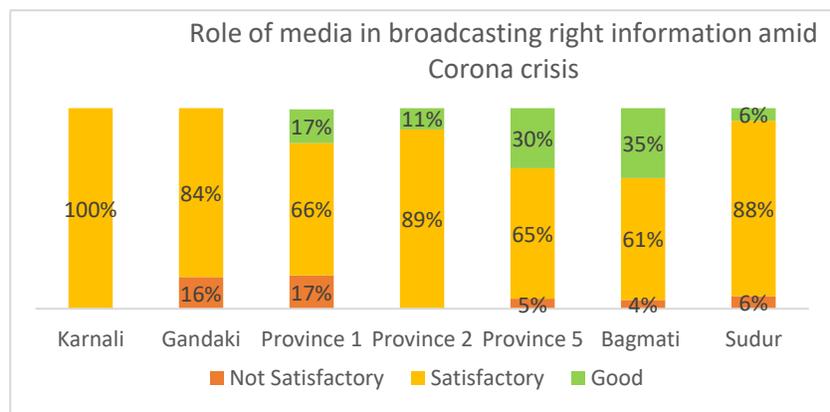
accessing relief materials for many of the respondents was the government, at 50%. Moreover, 2% of the respondents accessed the relief materials up to four times where 66% accessed it once.

- *Accountability*

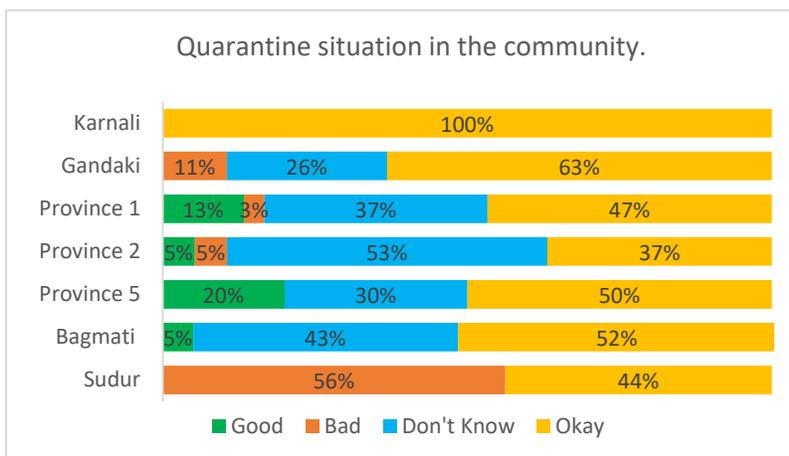


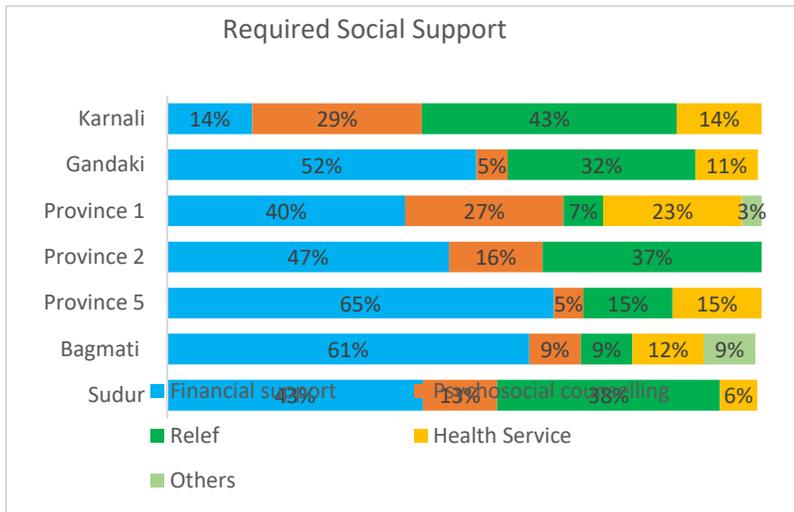
Moreover, 36% of the respondents shared that they were fully complying by the government-imposed lockdown, and 57% reported partial compliance.

Most the respondents found the role of the media to be satisfactory in disseminating information relating to the pandemic.

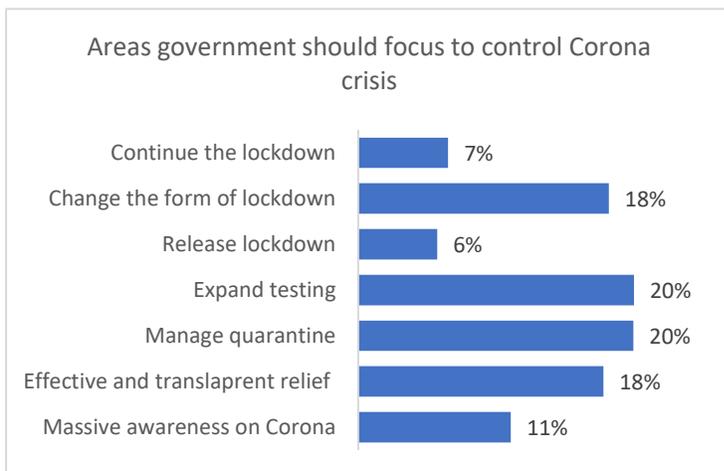


Moreover, 51% felt that the situation of the quarantine facility in their community was okay, and 11% felt that it was bad.

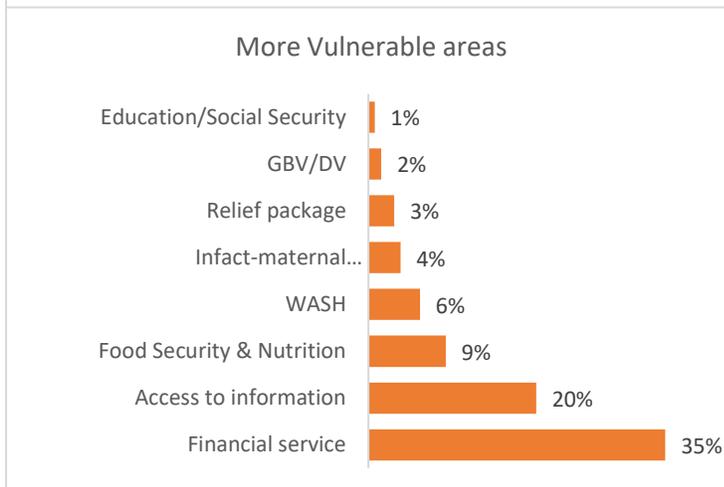




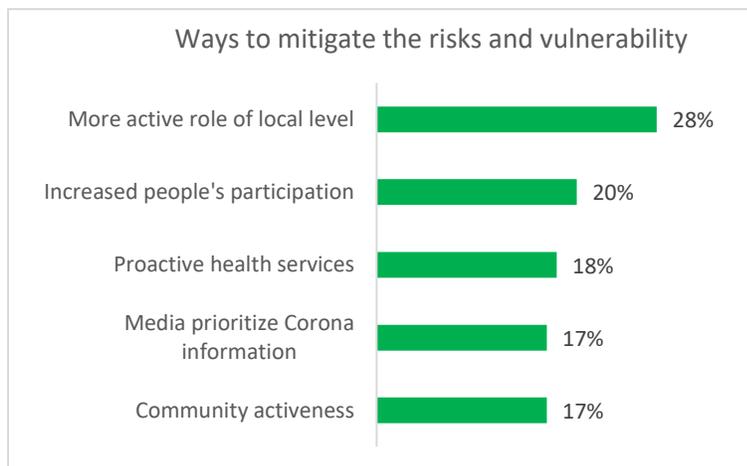
The survey revealed that 49% respondents needed financial support whereas some were looking for well-managed market access so that they could continue their businesses.



From the survey, majority of the respondents felt that the testing needed to be expanded and that the quarantine centres well-managed. Moreover, 7% felt there was a need to continue the lockdown.



The respondents also shared that services such as financial service (35%) are more vulnerable and demand more attention. The graph of the left provides the detailed responses.



The respondents saw the potential that local level holds in disseminating awareness to mitigate the risks of the pandemic. They identified the role that each sector could play to mitigate the vulnerabilities.

4. Observations from the field

Some more observations from the field include:

- All provinces faced hardship related to economy, psychosocial stress.
- The conditions of infant mother health, food security and nutrition remains vulnerable.
- There has been a decrease in income of many of the respondents because of the pandemic. Some of them have even lost their jobs.
- Respondents have shared that the relief distribution was not always transparent and impartial.
- The respondents also feel that there has been a rise gender based, religious and caste-based violence post COVID-19.
- The education of the children has greatly been impacted with 75% reporting that the education of their children has not commenced, and only 11% with access to online classes.

5. Best Practices/Lesson Learned

Province 1:

- Agriculture is a primary source of income in Province 1, and therefore there is scope to create opportunities in this sector.
- There is a need for immediate relief distribution for those who have not been able to access it.
- There is a lot of opportunity to engage the youth in the relief distribution. The concerned authorities must therefore consider this option.
- Moreover, all concerned local governments and civil society organizations need to work hand in hand to coordinate the relief distribution effort.
- A market linkage should be established so that businesses can operate. While doing so, the safety measures set by the World Health Organization need to be adhered to.

- The concerned authorities must also prioritize education. A lack of stable Internet access and limited technological advancement makes digital learning difficult in many places. Therefore, alternate strategies need to be devised and implemented.
- Moreover, the community schools that have been turned into quarantine centres need to consider the action plan for re-opening schools in a safe manner. The children who study there must be assured of their safe health.
- Local governments can coordinate with people with disabilities to conduct psycho-social counselling to them in digital manners. These kind of counselling services can also be expanded for the wider community and geared against caste-based, gender-based and religious discrimination and violence. Other popular means to impart such messages, along with information on being safe from COVID-19, include radio, FMs, TVs.

Province 2:

- There were approximately 88% respondents who reported that someone in their family had lost their jobs. In such a context, it is important to create opportunities for these groups so that they can earn their livelihood.
- Agriculture can be modernized and farmers can be provided with technical support to improve their farming practises.
- In Province 2, supporting small industries can also help protect the jobs of many who are employed there. This can then serve as a huge relief during the crisis.
- The youth in the province, and beyond, can be mobilized to conduct awareness campaigns and facilitate social cohesion at the community level.

Bagmati Province:

- There is scope to support the growth of various herbs in various districts in the province as the climate is suitable for it. This can then help improve the income of the people. In fact, the returnee migrants can be engaged in herb production so that they maintain a source of livelihood, and the herb production supports the broad economy.
- The local government should work with the provincial and federal government, as well as civil society bodies, to mitigate all forms of discrimination and violence the community level so that it is ultimately uprooted.

Gandaki Province:

- A well-managed quarantine facility, separate for male and female, must be managed. Females who have stayed in a same-sex quarantine have faced a host of problems and have reported to not feel safe in them.
- Some of the quarantine centres in the province were damaged and swept away by the recent floods.

Province 5:

- The students have not been able to access proper education since the lockdown, and only a very few students have access to online classes.
- The government can support the creation of mobile education camps to ensure that knowledge and learning is easily accessible to all, even those without digital facilities. Moreover, the local

government can also open learning centres at the ward level so that each student gets the opportunity to learn during this period.

- In order to support the education endeavours in the current context, youth groups and volunteers need to be mobilized.
- Non-formal educational programmes should also be introduced so that students in remote parts of the province, and the country, as well as those marginalized can access it easily.

Karnali Province:

- Majority of the respondents from the province reported a decrease in their income because of the pandemic, at 86%. As majority of the people in Karnali rely on agriculture, the pandemic has greatly affected their income source.
- The lack of access to a market is also affecting this problem, where people are not being able to sell their produce despite production.
- A lot of the returnee youths have lost their jobs. On average 300 – 400 people are returning homes, with Karnali province alone recording 55000 returnees.
- There is scope to capitalize on this and turn it into an opportunity. The government can provide trainings on farming as well as proper techniques to agriculture to the benefit of those returnees and the wider community.
- It is also commendable that the government has started segregating a male-female quarantine, understanding the different needs of the two sexes. The government is still working on implementing a more gender-friendly and disability friendly quarantine facility.
- In Karnali, health officials are also returning to their worked with the right medical kits and proper protection.
- Some local governments have allocated budget for five to six months to organize employment generation activities in the province which need to be utilized properly.

Sudurpaschim Province

- 81% respondents said that there are gender and caste-based discrimination in their communities.
- To reduce these kinds of discrimination, the local government and local civil society should work collectively.
- The local government should maintain detail records with information such as unemployment, migrant returnees, traditional occupation workers so that they can provide opportunities in a systematic manner.
- The knowledge and skill that the migrant returnees brought with them should be utilized for income

generating activities in the district. Loans should be provided to the returnees to invest in agricultural activities.

- Traditional occupation should be updated and the use of modern tools should be incorporated.
- Appropriate price for labour should be provided.
- Government should develop programmes to retain returnee migrants, who are primarily youth.

6. Recommendations:

Most of the respondents were engaged in agriculture and as daily wages earners; more than half of the respondents stated that their own as well as their family's income decreased in the COVID-19 pandemic and some even reported to have lost their jobs. In the current context, it is vital to explore more employment and income generation options. Agriculture sector suffered because of a lack of agri-input and market as well as transport of the produce. In the survey, many respondents reported to have faced difficulties in transporting their produce. Initiatives like subsidy for agriculture should be created and a proper market supply mechanism should be created so that it does not impact people's livelihood and the national economy in longer run. In terms of employment, other sectors for example, home based crafts/vocational trainings and other alternate job opportunities can be introduced for the people who have lost their jobs especially in the hospitality and tourism sectors. For the daily wage labourers, business and factories could be resumed in a safe manner. Moreover, relief packages should be distributed in fair and transparent manner. There must be an effective accountability mechanism and civil society should take lead on this front.

It is a relief that nearly half of the respondents reported to have witnessed the health facilities being resumed and providing services as before however, psychosocial counselling and telephone health counselling are still not available in the health centres. Many respondents reported mental tension as one of the major problems and rising incidents of suicide cases from different parts of the country. It is therefore very essential to give attention towards mental health services. Massive programmes on online and telephone psychosocial counselling as well as mental health awareness campaigns through different media should be in place. The people who are in quarantine centres and are COVID-19 positive should be provided with psychosocial counselling services at quarantine centres. Good psychological counselling and mental health support system should be available at the local level too. Since there have been increasing reports of suicide in the COVID 19 period, there should be stress counselling and psychological counselling programmes and media- local TV , radio can develop awareness and youth groups can support in developing programmes.

Some respondents reported to have witnessed religious, caste-based or gender-based violence in their community and COVID-19 crisis has exacerbated it even further. Now there's a new form of discrimination being witnessed and prevalent in the community because of COVID-19 and resulting in social disruption. There must be a clear and effective plan for the reintegration of people infected with COVID-19 in their family and society. There must be massive interventions in the front of community awareness and behavioural change.

The government should prepare short- and long-term strategy thorough reviewing their existing strategy to uplift the socio-economic livelihoods. Subsidy and soft loan should be provided by the government



through banks for those from marginalized community. There is also a need to support modernizations of traditional occupations by providing them technical skills, seed money and supporting in the value chain. As majority of the respondents were daily wage earners so they were severely hit by the lockdown. Special programmes based on agriculture should be developed by the government and private agencies for Sudurpaschim province, Bagmati province among others, where unemployment is rising.

Discrimination based on caste, religion and gender are linked with human rights issues. So, measures must be taken to secure a dignified life, meaningful participation, leadership building and access over resources and state mechanism, federal, provincial and local government. Caste based, religion and gender-based violence are prevalent in the society. The local government, NGOs, civil societies and media should organise effective awareness programmes. The victims should have easy access to complaint mechanism and empowerment programmes should be developed by targeting marginalised communities. Behavioural change is also required in the society and communities to facilitate this change.

Moreover, as illiteracy is high in Province No 2, among marginalised communities, it is essential to develop literacy programmes and special COVID awareness programmes for them. At present, Province no 2 is a hot spot for COVID 19.

Maximum number of respondents' income had decreased or was badly affected and even lost their job by the COVID 19, hence measures should be taken to create new jobs and provide economic opportunities for them. Large numbers of youth force have returned from neighbouring country India and the Middle East during this COVID 19 pandemic. Many of the migrant workers lost their job but have new skill and knowledge which should be able to tap and utilise by the governments and policy makers. All three tiers of governments should join hands and coordinate to use local available resources. The local products should be well marketed.

During such times, the media too can play a very active role. Fake news, disinformation, misinformation about COVID-19 was prevalent in the media. In such a case, the media can be sensitized to develop factual information as well as targeted messages for marginalised, backward and illiterate community / population. Since this is a new virus, special messages and awareness materials should have been developed explaining it for target communities.

The situation and facilities at the government established quarantines should be improved. There should be basic facilities at the quarantines and should be separate and safe for women. All the quarantines should be disable friendly with accessibility to them. Since more than 50 percent of the respondents from Sudurpaschim replied that the quarantine situation is bad, the local government, civil societies should support to make them better.

The local products should also be linked to the market. The local government and private institutions can reach out to them and can support in providing modern technical knowledge to increase the agricultural productions, fertilizers to agricultural groups, branding of products so that they can hold in the market.

The relief distribution made by the local government and private sectors should be transparent. The media and civil societies should act as a watchdog and provide enough information to the needy population through different channels so that they have access to it .

7. Conclusion

The event was filled with enriching insights from the presenters of the seven provinces. The experts also shared how they were working to address the myriad issues caused by the pandemic. They underscored the need to understand marginalization, and the multiple and intersecting forms of marginalization. Moreover, they informed the attendees of the activities that were being carried out by the government and development partners to support the current context. The event echoed the need to work together to collectively combat COVID-19. The programme turned out to be a good initiative in terms of engaging young people across the country to access the ground reality. All those present lauded the effort and insight of the volunteers who led the webinar.

A. ANNEX

Annex 1: List of Experts and Presenters

Experts: The following experts provide their input in the webinar:

- Ms. Shree Satya Devi Mahara, Vice Chairperson of Laljhadi Rural Municipality in Kanchanpur District, Sudurpaschim Province.

Ms. Mahara shared the resource mobilization aspect that Lalhadi Rural Municipality has to support the COVID-19 relief and recovery work. Furthermore, she elaborated on the state of returnee migrants, the state of the quarantine, and the state of testing in her rural municipality. She further expressed her appreciation toward the presentation from the youth volunteers. Furthermore, she also shared the activities that the local government has been engaging in to support the relief and recovery from the pandemic.

- Mr. Tek Tamata, Portfolio Manager in UNDP Nepal.

Mr. Tamata highlighted that the topic was very pertinent and elaborated on the work that UNDP was doing in Nepal to support this endeavour. He emphasized that the marginalized groups deserve to access their rights to better themselves, and also shed light on the fact that COVID-19 places them at a “double marginalization” which exacerbates their difficulties. He highlighted the need to first analyse the issues to develop evidence backed work to support socio-economic recovery that UNDP is currently working on in context to the pandemic in Nepal.

Volunteers: The following volunteers presented the major issues from their provinces:

Province	Sex	Name of the volunteers
1	Female	Shanti Tamang

2	Female	Aakanksha Jha
Bagmati	Female	Sita Subedi
Gandaki	Female	Prativa Dawadi
Province 5	Male	Achyut Gautam
Karnali	Male	Bhanu Bhakta Sharma
Sudurpashchim	Male	Mukundra Jaisi